1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964
EH14 Sarakatsani EH14
Zagori

A man may occasionally give his wife a kid 432
to sell but otherwise chickens and eggs are her only source of 434
cash income.

The huts which protect the Sarakatsani from the weather and 342
the curiosity of other families, are of two principal kinds, circu- 462
lar and domed (τουρλωτά), or rectangular and 'arched' (ἁψιδωτά).
Except that in the case of rectangular huts the men help the
women to erect the posts and crossbeams the building of the
hut is entirely the work of women. They cut, select, and tie into
position the pliable but strong branches which form the frame-
work of the circular hut. They collect, dress, and tie on to the
wooden skeleton the bundles of reeds, grasses, or ferns with
which the hut is thatched. They level the floor inside and plas- [237]
ter both the floor and the walls to a height of three feet with a
mixture of mud and mule-dung. They form the central hearth.
Five or six women working continuously are able to erect a hut [461]
of conventional size[4] in two to three days, although it will have [476]
taken them at least as many days to find and prepare their
materials.

The treatment of the wool from which the Sarakatsani make 236
the greater part of their clothing and all their blankets is also, [462]
naturally, in the hands of the women. The wool is divided into
three categories according to the fineness and length of the
staple. It is washed in hot water and beaten with a wooden
implement to free it from surplus grease. After the wool has 283
been dried in the sun and disentangled with a carding tool [236]
(λαναρι) it is spun by hand from a distaff (ρόκα). This is a
lengthy process and when a woman's hands are not otherwise
employed she is either spinning or knitting. Finally, the spun 286
thread is woven into cloth on the simple wooden loom which the [221]
women operate continuously during the months of August and
September when the flocks and the shepherds make fewer
demands on their energies. On the loom are made the blankets,
the shepherd's capes woven from a mixture of wool and goats'
hair, and the cloth for jackets, skirts, and trousers. Today pro- 294
fessional village or town tailors cut and sew the suits of the men,
but the cloth remains their own. Only shoes, shirts, and cotton 291
material (for the young girls' dresses at the summer festivals) are 432
bought from the shops of Jannina and other towns.

[4] A circular hut for a family of 6 or 7 adults generally has a diameter of 14 or 15 feet. Height and diameter are approximately the same.

1:Campbell E-5 (1954-1955)1964
EH14 Sarakatsani EH14
Zagori

family comes into the hut and will not sit down unless specifically requested to do so.

The young bride is punctilious in providing all these expressions of respect and humility. In this new situation what is important for her is that her formal membership in the extended family shall in as short a time as is conventionally possible become a more spontaneous acceptance of herself by the other members of the group. Yet even at this early stage, when as an individual she counts for very little, she is aware that her person separates her husband from his family of origin. The dowry wealth which she has brought, and in which the whole family takes pride, is property held in trust for her unborn children; it may not be alienated for the benefit of her husband's brothers. The distaff, with which she spins her first wool on the Wednesday, is a gift from her husband, preferably carved by himself or, if he has not the skill, at least commissioned by him.[1] The bride may not bring a distaff from her own home nor may she receive one as a gift from her mother-in-law or anybody else in her husband's family. This is an object with mystical power which will protect her children from evil forces. In these respects it is a symbol of the solidarity and future autonomy of her family which as yet scarcely exists but whose full development only death or sterility can hinder. Her awareness of the odd contradiction in her new situation, the humility required of her on the one hand, the assurance of her ultimate triumph on the other, only increases the bride's feelings of shyness and shame, attitudes which on other grounds she is anyway expected to express.

During the early months of the marriage the young husband gives the minimum of overt public attention to his bride. He may, in stern, almost harsh, tones, make some simple request of her for food and drink or dry clothes, but he does not make conversation. For her part, a bride will never address her husband before other members of the family. If she requires anything she arranges it through her husband's brother. There is not, during this period, the slightest inclination on the part of the husband to champion his wife in any dispute which she may have with the other women of the family. Nor does he show the least annoyance when a brother, in his presence,

[1] See Chatzimichalis, op. cit., vol. i, Part B, p. 410.

585 535 long chain of the dancers. Their pace subsided to a ritual shuffle. There is nothing unusual in this; with a few exceptions, Greek dances, however many people may be joined hand in hand, are in effect solos — everything devolves on the leader, and each dancer, when his turn comes, fulfills the temporary role of coryphaeus. The job of the others, and especially of his immediate neighbor, to whom he is linked by a handkerchief, is to support him in his convolutions, and these are astonishing when a real mountain dasher is in the lead. But today, even after the first bridal saraband, the Dionysiac zest seemed to abandon the others when they linked hands. The dominance of form in the life of these nomads began to dawn on us.

595 Outside this semicircle, however, all was rejoicing. Staidness evaporated on release, and scores of young nomads were carousing and reeling under [535] the branches. Squatting or standing among the wigwams, rings of geometrical women confabulated or sang together, and there was even an ex- [283] clusive little ellipse of dancing women. Their gatherings were abristle — like those of the men with their crooks — with the carved distaffs tucked in their belts, all cloudy with rough hanks of raw wool, the spindles rising and falling at the end [854] of their twirling threads. Some of the younger of these spinning squaws had wooden cradles slung papooselike on their backs, each containing [533] a miniature nomad. Their songs had the same epic themes, laced with lament, as those of the men. The murmur of their talk was broken, again and again, with peals of laughter.

The Sarakatsánissas, usually so silent in the

271
531
595

[p.81-A]

415
234
251 /38/

/38/ A cask large enough to permit the storage of up to 100 kilograms of cheese, and finally, a tub in which butter is kept (fig.22).

415
824 The staves of these large and small tubs, and the buckets are very often adjusted and held in place by means of hoops formed from flexible branches of fir from which the needles have previously been [199] removed. However, this technique is of recent introduction among the [322] Sarakatsani. Formerly, they /the tubs/ were carved out of solid wood.

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

283
824
→

/38 cont./

283 Equipment related to weaving and wool

This equipment includes:

The distaff: there are two kinds of distaffs found among the Sarakatsani.

[824] The first is merely a tree branch 60 centimeters long which ends in a three-pronged fork onto which the tuft of wool is fastened (fig. 23).

/39/ The second is made up of two parts: first, a branch of the same length as that we have described makes up the vertical part of the distaff; a small, board fastened perpendicularly to the preceding part forms a cross ready to receive the tuft (fig. 24 and 25).

[531]

Fig. 24

Fig. 25

/39 cont./

283 However, one finds variations, the most interesting of which is this: the vertical part is flattened at its upper end, thus producing the form of a lyre (fig. 26).

The bobbin which is fundamentally only an accessory of the distaff is the principal twisting tool and the object around which one winds the spun wool (winding-on). It consists of two parts: one is the bobbin properly speaking, or the spindle; the other, the weight is /40/ a piece of hard wood in the shape of a truncated cone pierced at the two ends, so that it can set on the spindle (fig. 106 [probably a misprint; reference seems to be to Fig. 26]).

[142] [291] ←

[286] →

Fig. 26

Fig. 27

286 The idiastra: this is a thin wood or board in the shape of an elongated rectangle (4 x 30 centimeters), each of the two long sides of which is pierced with regularly spaced holes, and the ends of which are shaped like handles (fig. 27). It resembles a draw-plate /filiere?/.

/47 cont./

236 her feet;. With her right hand the carder holds the upper board by its handle. Finally, with the left hand, she brings the tufts of wool between the toothed surfaces of the boards.

Sorting: it is done in the course of the carding. The longest strands are put aside as the carding proceeds and are reserved for the manufacture of the better fabrics, those which are used for making clothing. The short strands are for other uses.

[283] It is also during the carding that the wool is prepared in advance for spinning; each two or three cardfuls make a distaff-feel.

283 Spinning: the bunches are then placed on the /48/ distaff. Once this is loaded, the Sarakatsani woman starts to spin by using a spindle. (10)

10. The three stages of this operation among the Sarakatsani, as elsewhere, are: drawing out, twisting and winding on. See A. Leroi-Gourhan, L'homme et la matière, p. 259.

The handling of the spindle varies according to the quality of the yarn one wishes to obtain. If one wishes to prepare fine yarn for clothing, the spindle is suspended by the thread itself and turned freely in the air (fig. 26). A On the other hand, if the thread

A [See p.49--Analyst]

/48 cont./

283 is intended for making covers, velentza, as well as rugs, the spindle is turned by the hand of the spinner, and this process, called drougha, produces a thicker thread (fig. 36).

[291]

Fig. 36

It is obvious that the position of the distaff is different in each of the two instances.

The wool of goats is always spun by the second method.

The yarn intended for the warp of the textile to be produced is twisted less than that used for the weft. Moreover, when a very fine thread is required, the Sarakatsani women place themselves at the top of a rock and let the spindle fall into space.

/49/

283 /49/ The Sarakatsani women spin constantly, whenever their hands are free. It is altogether common to see a woman spinning as she walks, [482] [313] her back loaded with a huge bundle of firewood or a tub full of water, in addition to a nursing child.

Winding: the spinning finished, the spinner frees the spindle and, by hand, winds the thread into balls.

294 386 Dyeing: the natural colors of sheep wool are white, black, and in rare instances, brown. The goat wool is gray-black or, exceptionally, a very dark chestnut.

It seems that, traditionally and even recently, the Sarakatsani esthetic was content with the natural color of the wool. Thus, the decorative motifs of the women's clothing were white on a black background. (The men's clothing, or rather the articles they make themselves do not have decorations).

386 However, recently, the Sarakatsani have adopted bright colors (red, yellow or green) for their blankets and their rugs. They have thus learned to dye the wool by using chemical dyes (aniline) bought commercially.

283 386 In order to facilitate permeation, they arrange the wool to start with in hanks which they call vanda. In order to form a vanda they undo a ball by winding the thread around the forearm, that is to say, between the wrist and the elbow. This traditional process is also used during

/49 cont./

283 386 the preparation of the loom.

The rest of the procedure "dyeing with aniline colors" is not of particular interest ethnographically, hence it will not be treated here.

386 The Sarakatsani also dye the fabrics intended for the making of garments. The technique that applies to it will be described in a separate paragraph.

The preparation of the loom.

286 When these various procedures are finished, the yarn is ready to be woven. However, before setting to work, the women must prepare the loom.

These preparations include:

--mounting the warp,

--installing it on the loom,

--finally, preparing the shuttles.

/50/ Mounting the warp is a task both complicated and delicate, which requires a series of micro-procedures.

The most important procedure is that which consist of warping the loom.

In order better to understand the detail of this procedure let us suppose that the warp is but a single thread.

Five pegs approximately 30 centimeters high are planted in the ground according to the arrangement indicated in the following diagram:

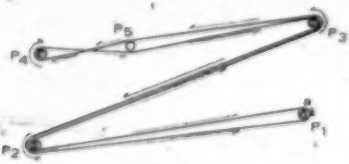

Fig. 27

/52 cont./

286 There remains the preparation of the bobbins for the shuttle.

283 286 We have already said that the yarn, whether dyed or not, is wound into balls. For it to be transferred to the quill of the shuttle. it must be given the shape of a spindle. The women therefore wind the yarn on the distaff and remove it as soon as it is loaded, so that the yarn wound around itself forms a cylinder, and the quill is placed into its cavity.

286 And this final micro-process ~~completes~~ /53/ the preparations for weaving, which we shall now describe in detail.

Weaving. - procedures and products.

In general, weaving presupposes the passing of the shuttle through the "shed" of the warp, the successive working of each of the treadles

/263 cont./

the tree of immortality is the vine: M. Eliade: Ibid., pp. 247 and 248, "the vine, the plant expression of immortality--just as the vine in archaic traditions has remained the symbol of youth and eternal life." say that this libation gives rise to "health, abundance and good fortune." Sometimes the bride also pours out water, in order to be always "fresh as water."

However, abundance is further sustained by the snake for the polyvalent symbolism of the latter promotes abundance. Though explicit testimonies are lacking, the facts speak for themselves. It will be recalled that the Sarakatsani have extensive woodcrafts. On all the wooden objects they make are found various decorative motifs, mostly geometric and generally beautiful. Looking at them closely one immediately realizes that the snake, or rather the viper, appears only on the staffs of the shepherds or on the distaffs (fig. 104).A It is certain that the handle of the staff, in the shape of a definite and marked curvature, in itself suggests the movement of a snake. But the shape of the distaff calls to mind nothing similar. Moreover, nothing explains the absence of this motif on other objects. Now, it is obvious that the presence of the animal on the staff and the distaff is symbolic much more than it is ornamental. The snake accompanies these objects because they represent the two principal economic activities of the Sarakatsani, herding and wool crafts. If it is agreed that the chthonian forces favor fecundity and fertility, hence abundance, the viper will augment the yield from these two fundamental activities.

To complete our discussion of this subject we must still mention the Sarakatsani observances bearing on the propitious days for the performance of certain tasks. Thus, the shearing must never begin on Tuesday. On the other hand, it is altogether advisable to start the shearing on Maundy Thursday by symbolically removing a little wool from a sheep. Maundy

A, /See p. 429--Analyst/